

CUSTOMER CASE STUDY

LENOX CORPORAION

A Global Quality
Management System

A Central System for Worldwide
CAPA and Vendor Quality



AssurX

LENOX CORPORATION

A Global Quality Management System

The director of quality for a company that has been a household name since 1889 knew he faced a big challenge finding and installing a global CAPA (Corrective and Preventive Action) system for his firm. The ambitious goals included electronically connecting thousands of employees and vendors spanning more than 25 countries and transforming them into a more efficient unit with the ability to keep even tighter control on already high quality standards and empower key personnel to make important decisions in real-time.



LENOX SELECTED ASSURX OVER ALL OTHER VENDORS FOR ITS:

- + Scalability for expansion of multiple applications
- + Ease of use
- + Fast, simple installation
- + Global visibility into worldwide operations

“Our operations are so geographically dispersed,” David Sommers, Director of Quality at Lenox Corporation noted. For example, the world renowned manufacturer and retailer of fine china dinnerware, glassware and silverware employs hundreds of people at its Lawrenceville, New Jersey headquarters, thousands of Lenox employees around the globe, and an extensive international network of vendors.

In addition, Lenox outsources three quarters of its operations, primarily in Europe and Asia. The Lenox product catalog adds approximately 1,000 new product SKUs each year, and typically has between 10,000 and 20,000 active SKUs at any given time.

Keeping the business successful and managing a quality system among such a extensive community of employees, vendors, and subcontractors represented a logistical day-to-day challenge.

The Lenox Challenge

Lenox was challenged with finding an electronic quality management system that would seamlessly connect the organization in key areas, including:

TRACKING EXPENSES FOR DEFECTIVE OR SUBSTANDARD SHIPMENTS

As the provider of fine china to the White House for decades, maintaining a high quality standard is core to the mission at Lenox, Mr. Sommers said. Lenox tableware is in the vice president’s official residence, more than 300 U.S. embassies, and governors’ mansions. Its giftware has been selected for presentation to dignitaries, resides in permanent collections of American cultural institutions, and is used in millions of homes. Therefore, each piece must meet Lenox’s exacting standards of manufacturing and delivery. Unacceptable product must be charged back, and tracking those expenses is critical to the bottom line.

COORDINATING REPORTS IN THE FUNCTIONAL TEST LAB

Mr. Sommers faced a situation where thousands of test lab reports were stored on paper—and remote access was extremely difficult and time-consuming. Exchanging information was creating inefficiencies in cost and turnaround time.

DISSEMINATING THE QUALITY INSPECTION REPORTS

Inspection reports are conducted in numerous overseas locations by independent service providers. These reports needed to reside in a centralized, easily-accessible location for immediate review and determination of any subsequent action.

The AssurX CAPA solution is a closed-loop system for clear oversight of activities, performance, and trends to keep your processes reliable and controlled for ISO and GxP.



“There are an enormous amount of other applications we are finding we can add for very little additional financial investment. Our use of AssurX is going to continue to grow substantially.”

DAVID SOMMERS

Director of Quality Lenox Corporation

FACTORY AND VENDOR QUALIFICATION

Vendor quality and qualification is an especially important consideration for Lenox because they work with so many outside vendors and firms. Lenox vendors are expected to have the same high quality standard or they will no longer be associated with the Lenox brand, Mr. Sommers said.

Lenox Selects the AssurX Platform

As a leading CAPA system provider throughout the world, AssurX launched it the first Web-based CAPA tracking system on the market. AssurX built a myriad of functionality into the fully automated QMS including universal email integration that allows for the use of any existing e-mail system, strict security controls, and the ability to attach any types of files including documents, drawings, images and spreadsheets.

The AssurX solution was designed from the ground up to easily integrate with other information systems including ERP, Manufacturing Execution Systems (MES), Supply Chain Management, Customer Relationship Management and proprietary corporate systems.

This gives companies the ability to harness the power of browser-based systems, reduce IT labor and infrastructure costs, ease the learning curve for new users, and redirect valuable IT resources to more critical projects within the organization. All that is required now to manage a robust quality system is an Internet browser.

The AssuX platform has proven to be easy to implement, manage, and extend, Sommers cited, most notably:

- + Ease of use when it comes to adding new users. This represents an important administrative feature for Lenox, especially with the many vendors it works with. *“AssurX’s concurrent license helps us tremendously when it comes to flexibility of usage,”* Mr. Sommers said. AssurX was the first company to offer true zero-client architecture in CAPA systems. With 100% pure HTML being sent to the browser, compatibility, reliability and security problems disappear. Firms with mixed environments of Windows, UNIX, Linux and MACs can freely collaborate.
- + Ease of extensibility for additional quality processes. Lenox has added several new quality systems since the AssurX was first installed, and anticipates adding several more including storage and processing of consumer and customer complaints and returns. *“There are an enormous amount of other applications we are finding that we can add for very little additional financial investment,”* Mr. Sommers said.

Sommers also praised the easy, simple installation that was bolstered by strong support from AssurX. Without requiring any client-side software installation, validation is only required on the application server. Mr. Sommers said he has been impressed by the platform’s flexibility in countless areas, including designing forms.

“It is feature-packed, with email notification and escalation” as needed to handle important issues that could otherwise be missed. For example, when safety issues are involved, Lenox can quickly escalate for signatures so everyone who needs to know is aware of critical product testing and approval status.

A global CAPA solution provides information and visibility throughout the entire organization in real-time. Users across the world, in any department can capture, assess and track corrective and preventive actions in one system.



“There was lots of paper and virtually no record or way to tell really where anything was in the process,”

DAVID SOMMERS

Director of Quality Lenox Corporation

Increasing Control with AssurX

AssurX has been instrumental in addressing Lenox’s requirements for tracking expenses, accessing lab results and inspector reports, and controlling factory and vendor specifications.

TRACKING EXPENSES ASSOCIATED WITH SHIPMENT QUALITY

AssurX allows product supervisors at remote locations to view and discuss remediation with vendors and other partners in Product Discrepancy Reports (PDRs) coming from distribution centers around the world. This allows Lenox to more effectively track product quality on arrival and take quicker steps to address a quality control issue. Before AssurX, Mr. Sommers noted that the PDR process was especially cumbersome, with easily a half a dozen email messages involved around each one. *“There was lots of paper and virtually no record or way to tell really where anything was in the process,”* he said.

PRODUCING AND DISTRIBUTING FUNCTIONAL TEST RESULTS:

Lenox conducts functional testing on many of its products such as cookware to make certain they meet performance standards, Sommers said. Lenox now posts all test result reports on the internet and shares them as needed with the appropriate product vendor or design group to rapidly resolve any fundamental product deficiencies.

OVERSEAS PRODUCT INSPECTIONS

With such far-reaching, global operations, AssurX enables Lenox access to a single, electronic repository for all inspection reports. For example, Lenox tracks over/under quantity shipments and has replaced offline tracking, consolidating information and making it quickly accessible for correction.

FACTORY AND VENDOR AUDITS

Lenox has streamlined their factory and vendor qualification process and shares that information instantly with appropriate team members. For example, auditors now photograph stock shapes and other product and operational visuals and attach those to their audit reports. Team members anywhere in the world, if cleared to access the information, can see how the vendor and factory operate. *“Our use of CATSWeb is going to continue to grow substantially,”* Mr. Sommers said.

Conclusion

An effective CAPA program is a sound business strategy that translates into competitive advantage. By implementing a closed-loop CAPA system, companies can address and correct any defects or failures in the production and fulfillment process with greater efficiency. They can decrease time investigating root causes and implementing quality improvements to minimize the likelihood of recurrence, as well as improve time to market.